

## THE MINING REGIONS.

## MONTANA.

THE MINING REGIONS.—VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY THE BANDS OF DESPERADOES—EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS DISORDER—FIRST EXECUTION.

From Our Special Correspondent.

THE "Vigilance Committee" is familiar to all Eastern readers, but there are few who have had any conception of crime as it compassed the isolated mountain mining regions, or of its inevitable merchandise. California tolerated the rule of lawlessness and desperadoes for years, but finally effected an organization founded on the maxim *non propter spem, sed propter timorem*, and the leaders of disorder and lawlessness were executed or banished. But California then had large cities, vast commerce, easy access to the great business centers of trade, and a social bulwark to strengthen the harsh but imperative reformation. Not so with the Territories of the Rocky Mountains. Their wealth was discovered just when the golden slopes of the Pacific had become intolerable for those who preferred any crime on the desolate to honest industry. Colorado, Idaho, and Montana were isolated from the civilized world. Hundreds or thousands of miles had to be traveled over mountain passes and almost trackless plains, uncivilized save by the pitiless savage, and the population was of necessity rude, without social restraints, and naturally tended to semi-barbarism. There was no government, no law, no access to the protecting force of the national authority for years, and here were most inviting holds for the banished desperadoes of other lands, and every incentive to lead the upright down through the tempting, but ultimately fatal, labyrinth of crime. Few families were among the early settlers, and the happy influences of faithful wives and virtuous daughters were unknown. The influence of woman, so far as felt, came from the hopelessly fallen, and like all perverted angels of light, they hastened the mastery of wrong and led the way. Gamblers plied their vocation without blush or restraint, on the most public places. Murderers infested every locality for gold, and organized themselves to take life for gold, and organized themselves to take life for gold, and organized themselves to take life for gold. It is a tradition of Denver that Mr. Greeley was so highly respected when visiting that place in 1850, that as he mounted a box to address the citizens near the "Elephant Canal," the dealer of three card monte on the sidewalk close by suspended his game until the speech was concluded. This was considered a most marked deference to the public appreciation of the man, and a tribute that few Bishops could have won. So common was this fearful vice there, and in all the other Territories as they were first settled, that every public place on the streets and sidewalks but too successfully invited the miner to be defrauded of his earnings.

I have, in a previous letter, referred in general terms to the reign and decline of crime in Colorado, and the stern retribution the Denver Vigilantes visited upon some of the most desperate leaders in lawlessness; but it was reserved for Montana to organize and maintain the most efficient combination of order-loving men that this country has ever witnessed. Just as Colorado had become strong enough to enforce some measure of public order and safety, the richest gulches of the continent were discovered in Idaho and Montana, and there was a general exodus of thieves and murderers from all the other mining regions, and also from the haunts of evil in the Eastern cities, to inaugurate the supremacy of crime in this new Eldorado. Four years ago (in June, 1863) the surpassing richness of Alden Gulch was discovered. With the lucky adventurers who opened its glittering wealth came

"The first low wash of waves, where soon shall roll a human sea."

Nevada was the first mining camp established. It is down near the extremity of the gulch; but as its wonderful deposits of the precious metals were opened up the stream, Virginia City was founded. It was called Virginia, in honor of the then Rebel chieftain's wife, and two-thirds of its inhabitants were infatuated with the hope soon to be subjects of the notorious heroes of treason. Antietam, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Atlanta, Nashville, Five Forks, and Appomattox were then unknown to fame, and the fitting representatives of unlovely rebellion in these mountain fastnesses had forgotten that there is one higher dream than that, whose name they so fondly cherished as to rear thereto a city, they must soon live only in the history of the overthrow of wrong in Montana. Judge Bissel indignantly and arbitrarily expunged the name, and substituted Virginia as his first legal record, informing the bewildered audience, in language more emphatic than polite, that no such blot should mar the records of justice in this court. A year before the settlement of Virginia, the rich placers of Beaver Head and Deer Lodge had been discovered, and it was in these localities that the most perfectly organized and best appointed band of desperadoes ever known on the continent had its origin. Its system was perfect, its plans devised and executed with consummate skill, and it reached into every camp close upon the footsteps of the miners. While Bannock City was its original center, as Virginia grew in importance and surpassed all other camps in wealth and population, it promptly extended its operations until its chief field was here. It was no loose aggregation of independent thieves and cutthroats. It had a commander, subordinate executive officers, secretaries, agents, stool-pigeons, signs, and by hieroglyphics could mark a man, a coach, or a train as to make them innocently invite their own destruction on the way. Certain of the leaders even wore their neckties in a peculiar knot, and by day or night, whether visible or shrouded in darkness, they could communicate with and aid each other. They were not, as in California and Colorado, the shunned and abandoned men of the communities in which they lived; they were the most wealthy, influential, and by many at first believed to be useful citizens. The leader of the band, Henry Plummer, was one of the most accomplished of villains, and a master-mind in the application and government of men, so shrewdly did he direct his operations, that he was chosen sheriff of both Madison and Beaver Head Counties, and his deputies were selected from the most trusted and expert of his band. The counties had no legal organization; no authority was known other than the regulations adopted by the settlers, and might made right. With the power of the people in the two richest and most populous counties in his keeping, it is not wonderful that for nearly two years the band prospered and defied detection. So completely did the organization compass everything relating to their interests that every place was watched, its yield traced to the time of shipment, and its rates with treasure. They were, as a rule, lucky if they lost only their gold and saved their lives. If they started in a coach or with a train, morning signs were marked upon them, or upon something about them, to notify the predatory bands to strike and secure the plunder; or, if vengeance was to be glutted, as was often the case, the traveler would be unconsciously notified the skulking for that his life-blood was to be theirs. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were thus plundered from miners and business men, and if arrests were made, the prisoners were delivered to Sheriff Plummer, the chief of the robbers. They thus escaped punishment, and were soon off again to operate for the band in some new field, where recognition was improbable. This organization became known as "Road Agents," from the fact that they committed most of their depredations on the routes of travel, and to this day no other term is applied to highway robbery in the Far West. They numbered over fifty desperate men, all well armed, and most skilled in the use of weapons, and had, beside, probably a hundred or more outside allies and dependents. They would scatter in every direction, and simultaneously coach, trains, or travelers, hundreds of miles apart. They had stations all through the country, where they could stop in safety, as the keepers were pimps of the band, and received small shares of the common booty. Thus these thousand sheaves of crime ramified throughout all the settlements and highways of Montana, held the law in their clutches and were supreme tyrants.

where in the Territory. Even when the civil law pretended to assume its prerogatives, this band either furnished or corrupted its officers, and no jury could be sworn that did not contain enough of their own members to control the verdict. Not only did they murder when necessary to rob, but they gradually became so bold that, upon the slightest provocation, they would deliberately shoot down men on the streets of Virginia, Nevada, or Bannock, and none dared to call them to account. Encouraged by habitual success, and confident that there was no power equal to the task of bringing them to punishment, they finally thought of Montana a reign of the most appalling terror, and men were compelled to defer to Plummer, obey his authority as an officer, and submit in silence to his atrocities to save their own lives.

But though "the mills of the gods grind slowly, they grind exceeding fine." Many prominent citizens had been murdered or robbed, and the depredations of the band on the routes to the States were so frequent that no one ventured to return with treasure. Every good citizen felt that there must soon be a terrible remedy applied, or all legitimate pursuits abandoned. Strange to say, the murder of one of the humblest residents of Montana—a simple, friendly German—was the feather that broke down public forbearance, and called into existence a power that has executed nearly 100 men, self-banished hundreds of others, and restored order, safety, and peace in Montana without a single stain of injustice upon its fame. The German was murdered to obtain some mules he had sold and was on his way to deliver them to the purchaser, who had already paid him for them. He had been in the employ of Mr. Clark, an old resident of California and a member of the Vigilantes there. The lifeless body had been secreted in a thicket of sagebrush, and the story circulated that the German had left for unknown parts with the mules and money. For some time there was no data to controvert the explanation made by the murderers; but, finally, a hunter brought down a grouse, it fell in the very thicket in which the body of the German was concealed, and told the story of another murder by the "Road Agents." The body was taken to the city, and Mr. Clark was the first man, I believe, to give form to the ripened resolution against the desperadoes. The effort was generally and promptly seconded, and once started, its sweep was boundless and merciless. It was a perilous undertaking. A single failure would have been fatal to all concerned in it, and it was not doubted that the lawless were being suspected of such a purpose before the organization was effected, not one could have lived to see their plans succeed, but they were discreet as resolute, their murder was unseen and unfeared until it took the murderer from his bed and the light of morning dawned upon his lifeless body suspended from a tree. There was no muzzling thunder before the terrible bolt fell with pitiless destruction upon the wrongdoers.

Of the many brave men who inaugurated and openly sustained this movement, no one can justly be awarded exclusive praise; but there is one who figures as conspicuously in the history of the Vigilantes as did Plummer in the reign of terror. Some 12 years ago I was accustomed to meeting on the streets of Chambersburg, Pa., a young man named John X. Beidler. His frugal wants were supplied by the manufacture of brooms, and finally he mixed the best of cock-tails and juleps at a neighboring Summer resort. He was as amiable and unassuming as a gad as the community could furnish, and his jolly, genial humor made him a favorite with all who knew him. Although he had attained his majority, he was scarcely five feet six inches in height, and was far below the average of men in physical power. He finally wandered West in search of fortune, and soon after the advent of Plummer came "X," the only name by which he is universally known in Montana. Thus the lame and the antelope were close upon each other. Strong in his inherent love of honesty, a stranger to fear, not powerful, but quick as thought in his actions, and firm in his purpose as the eternal mountains around him, he naturally entered promptly and earnestly into the effort to restore order and safety to society. That little was expected of him when he first cast his lot with the stern reformers is not surprising, but his tireless perseverance, unflinching courage, and singular skill in thwarting the plans of the common enemy, soon made him the chief pillar of the organization, and the unspeakable terror of every desperado. This diminutive man, without family or property to defend, has himself arrested scores of the most powerful villains, and has executed, in open day, an equal number under the direction of the wonderful fountain of retribution that was unceasingly surging around the hasty scaffold. So expert is he with his faithful pistol that the most seasoned of rogues have repeatedly attempted in vain to get "the drop" on him. Quick as a flash his pistol is drawn, cocked while drawing it, and presented to the doomed man with the stern demand, "hands up, Sir!" and the work is done. At one time, without aid, he arrested one of the most desperate thieves in a body, all well armed, and marched them before him to prison. "Hands up, gent!" was the first intimation they had from him that he had business with them, and submission was the only course of safety. Had any one of them attempted to reach toward his belt, he would have fallen that moment. There were citizens close by, and how many of them, if any, were sworn to protect and ready to aid Beidler, he knew well; the prisoners did not. This indelicate, unseen, immeasurable force seems to have ever stricken the most courageous thieves and murderers nerveless, when its sudden and fatal grasp was thrown around them. They would fight scores of men for their lives in any ordinary attempt to arrest them, but they were invariably "weakened" when the citizen confronted them in the name of public safety. No formalities were known. No process was read bearing the high seal of the courts. When, or where, the dread summons of the great unseen tribunal would come none could conjecture. The sleeping companion of the desperado in some distant rancho would probably drink and breakfast with him, and then paralyze him by the notice, "You're wanted—business at Virginia." In no instance did any of the many lawless characters arrested by the vigilantes ever fire a pistol in their own defense, even when they knew that death was inevitable. In most cases the opportunity to do so was but slight, but under all ordinary circumstances, the narrowest chances would be taken to effect escape. From "X" no criminal ever got away. To have attempted it would have been but to hasten death. So much did the desperadoes respect, as well as fear him, that most of them, when condemned to die by his hand, committed their last requests to him, and with him they have been restored. Order and public safety have been restored, but he still has employment in his favorite line. He continues to act as the chief detective of the territory. He comes and goes, and none but himself know his errand. "What's up X?" is a query that is generally answered, "after tracks," and "don't know," is his usual reply to all questions as to his route or time of departure. He has traversed alone every highway and settlement of Montana, prospected many of the unexplored regions, and is ever ready, without escort or aid, to pursue a criminal wherever he may seek refuge. His career has, indeed, been most remarkable, and his escape unharmed through his innumerable conflicts with the worst men, seems almost wholly miraculous. He has recently been appointed Collector of Customs for the port of Helena, but while there is a thief, a defaulter, a murderer, or a savage to disturb the peace of Montana he will remain the most efficient messenger of justice known in the mountain gold regions. He has lost none of his genial, kindly nature by his long service as the bearer of relentless retribution upon the lawless, and wherever he goes he is welcomed by every lover of order and government. When he is upon the war path "it's no for nothing the glad whistles," and crime has no escape but in timely retreat. Fully 3,000 perfectly organized men are at his back. They have their companies, officers, minute men, and messengers in every settlement, and he can rally in an instant scores or hundreds of true men to his side.

First execution was that of George Ives, and he was condemned by a court of the people. It was the turning point of order or anarchy. The outlaws were numerically the strongest, and the rescue of the

prisoner was among the probable results; but brave men were braver than ever before, and the cloud of crime that encompassed the court to control the verdict, or save the accused by fresh murder, was dissipated by the stern integrity and unblanching courage of the lovers of order. Col. Sanders, a young advocate, small in stature, but large in soul and manhood, conducted the prosecution, and for the first time the advancing column of wrong recoiled as the verdict was announced: "That George Ives be forthwith hung by the neck until he is dead." Fifty-eight minutes thereafter, but ten yards distant from the place he sat on trial, the fatal drop fell, and justice had a foothold in Montana. This was on the 21st of December, 1863. Soon after Sheriff Plummer and two of his band were executed together at Bannock. He swung from a gallows he had erected for the execution of another, and he maintained his wonderful self-possession to the end. His last act was a deliberate examination of the rope and drop, to be sure that his neck should be broken by the fall, and he was launched into eternity without a prayer. Five of his followers sleep in unmarked graves on the hill close by this city, who died together on one of the street corners, and then the resistless course of justice ran until, at last, near the head of the murmuring waters of the Gallatin, a lifeless body suspended from a tree bore this inscription: "Bill Hunter, the last of Henry Plummer's band." Several of those first arrested and executed confessed upon the gallows, and revealed the names of the whole organization; and with this information they rested not until there was not one of the original Plummer band among the living. Not one remains of that once omnipotent organization, to tell its crimsoned and fatal history. After the leaders had been executed—three at Bannock, and five at Virginia—one by one the scattered and fleeing fugitives were hunted down and sent suddenly to their long homes. All of them died without even the profession of penitence, and many of them blasphemed until their utterance was choked by the death-noise. Two of them leaped high in the air from the gallows, to hasten their presence before an unrepentant and avenging God. In these men self-banishment was considered no atonement. Thousands of dollars were expended to pursue those who fled hundreds of miles to escape this merciless retribution, but all in vain. When they felt safe in their isolated retreats, the hand of the Vigilants would swoop upon them, and they would find graves, unshriven and unmourned, wherever the ministers of offended justice crossed their path. Some had climbed the narrow passes to Idaho and Oregon, others had passed for refuge in California, and even South America has been tried in vain as a retreat from this colossal current of vengeance. All have been fruitless. The solemn judgment of the unseen tribunal must be executed though the ends of the earth have to be searched for the guilty victim. Not only justice inflexibly demanded it, but common safety was equally imperious in exacting that none once condemned should escape. They could infest the thousand miles of unpeopled plains and mountain canyons between this and the States, where the ministers of justice must sometimes travel, and no one was left to renew the vengeance of crime. They made themselves and the public safe by ceaseless pursuit, until the murderer lived only where all are judged in righteousness. Nor is their work wholly of the past. Although unseen and unknown, their sleepless eyes guard the far West with tireless vigilance. No desperado can ascend the Missouri without his name, description, and antecedents, either preceding or coming with him, and every settlement will have its faithful sentinels to challenge him on his arrival. There is no pomp or parade in their proceedings, and most who would fear them naturally suppose that they have disbanded as an organization, but the hapless rogue who lands in Montana will have the armor of his hopes speedily chilled by some unknown friend bidding him good-bye, and suggesting that he must depart without delay. No explanation is given—none is needed, and Montana loses a citizen she can better spare than that. Many miles from this place I saw a doomed man—doomed to death by this matchless human agency, and conscious of it. He was a prisoner in the hands of the law. He could escape but dare not, for around him are the silent and unknown sentinels of a tribe that has no technicalities in its trials. He may escape the cobwebs of the civil law, but the flies from day to day in hopeless despair. Some hour, not distant, he will go unwept to his final resting-place, and none will inquire why he has gone unwept.

Such is a brief and necessarily imperfect history of the triumph of justice in Montana. The civil courts are now in operation, but without the power of the Vigilantes crime would soon regain the ascendancy. Their organization is maintained as an auxiliary to the courts, and to reach out the arms of justice where the civil power is unequal to the task. Should the law ever prove too feeble for the support of order, then will the fist of 3,000 men rush to the public safety. No inflexible have been their means, no means, no ties, no circumstances, could be the guilty. One of their own number was found to have committed the crime of stealing property, if the sentence could be changed from death to banishment, but the criminal was one of the robbers, and the soldier sent to him. In three years of operations, covering nearly 100 executions, this organization is not to-day charged by friend or foe, with partiality or prejudice, or with a single unjust punishment meted out to any party. Justice has been rendered its unweakened labor, and its history is but the history of the supremacy of virtue, order, and justice in Montana.

The Victory of Egypt is said to have been immensely struck with the beauty of the English language, and to have found but one fault with them—that they rode on horseback, in his eyes a great indecorum. Rumor has it that he was in London a distant neighbor for £25,000, but does not say to whom it was presented.

The London Leader mentions a curious instance of fraud under an operation. A woman had fractured her leg by tripping over the foot of her bed. She was conveyed to the Middlesex Hospital, where amputation was pronounced to be necessary. It was performed under the supervision of a medical officer, and the patient, who was kept for 49 days in ignorance of the fact that she had lost her leg.

French local papers give a curious account of the capture of a K. W. S. Mackenzie, a member of the band of Alden Gulch, in the Department of Aude, near Narbonne. When the French were being attacked, a stream of carbide hydrogen gas was being poured into the mine, and the French were being killed by the gas. The French were being killed by the gas.

A remarkable instance of the well-known "curse of the redoubt" was recently reported from a great variety of plants around the buildings in the Park, which have been conveyed to Paris in packages from various parts of the world. The packages of "Gustave W." several plants may be seen which are peculiar to the country of that monarch.

Mr. Dundas Drummond had a business dispute with the late George Ives, and meeting that gentleman at a railway station, he was told that he was a "d-d liar." Mr. Mackenzie brought an action for libel, laying his damages at £1,000. The jury heard the evidence, and awarded £2,000. Mr. Dundas Drummond, who had been discovered that during in Scotland in an expensive recreation.

The Queen's dinner to the Belgians at Windsor was the last of the kind, and was a most successful one. The standing dishes of beef, lamb, and veal, 750 fowls, 250 roast ducks, 250 pickled tongues, 250 pigeons and wild pigeons, a handsome desert of blackberries, 2,000 bottles of Champagne, Moselle, claret, port, and sherry.

A singular accident from lightning occurred the other day in Ireland. As a young man in the telegraph office at Dublin was sitting at his desk, a lightning bolt struck the building, and the telegraph office was destroyed. The lightning struck the building, and the telegraph office was destroyed.

## CENTRAL PARK.

THE UPPER PARK TERRA INCOGNITA—ITS FLOWERS, ITS WONDERFUL BROOK, ITS BEAUTIFUL SCENERY—THE REPORT OF THE PARK COMMISSIONERS.

Of the tens of thousands of pleasure-seekers who visit Central Park every week comparatively few stray beyond the lower boundary of the new reservoir. Alighting from most of the railway lines at Fifty-ninth street, pedestrians are in the habit of setting a limit to their walk at the Mall, or the Ramble, and have even come to imagine that the portion which they occupy is the whole of the park. But what a task is now before us! To step down from thoughts of grassy knolls and lovers' nooks to the dry studies of the conservatory, and to the museum, to the ripple of water springing down the hillside, and look upon the stars in each other's eyes, and in the river.

But what business have our gray hairs to be competing with the breeze in such a spot, what right our old bones to chatter of its charms? Let us answer our own question. But what a task is now before us! To step down from thoughts of grassy knolls and lovers' nooks to the dry studies of the conservatory, and to the museum, to the ripple of water springing down the hillside, and look upon the stars in each other's eyes, and in the river.

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Revolutionary Powder-House "Joy forever" in the eyes of the lovers of an antiquarian amusement. Down the rocky side of the hill on which the block-house stands, and winding path, a throng of people, especially of the young, are seen. The "joy forever" is the cry of the young, and the "joy forever" is the cry of the young.

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## MAXIMILIAN'S TRIAL.

HIS DEFENSE BY A VERMONT LAWYER—CURIOS AND INTERESTING NARRATIVE.

(From The Boston (Vt.) Herald, Aug. 19, 1867.)

We are enabled, through the kindness of Henry Hall, esq., to publish a letter recently received from Judge Frederick Hall, giving an account of the efforts to save Maximilian from his fate. Judge Hall, the writer, was one of Maximilian's counsel, and prepared the brief in the case. CITY OF MEXICO, July 9, 1867.

BROTHER HENRY: I left San Luis Potosi—where I had written you—on the 25th of May, with the intention of visiting Gen. Corona on business. He was stationed with his division of men at Guadalupe, about three miles north-west of the City of Mexico. On the evening of the 26th I reached Queretaro, where the Emperor Maximilian was a prisoner. Immediately on my arrival the Emperor sent for me. At San Luis Potosi I had become acquainted with the Prince Maximilian, and he had previously consulted me to assist him. The next day I called upon him. Some time having been spent with me and my employe, a private audience was granted to me. I was not a lawyer, but I was a friend of the Emperor, and I was not a lawyer, but I was a friend of the Emperor, and I was not a lawyer, but I was a friend of the Emperor.

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